Parade 12/16/73

FOREVER VIGILANT: FIDEL CASTRO

THE POWER IN CUBA

What revolutionaries fear most is revolution.

Fourteen years ago when Fidel Castro took over Cuba, his first move was to organize a group of fanatical followers to seek out counter-revolutionaries.

He named this group the Committee of Defense of the Revolution (CDR) and told the members: "You must constantly watch each of your neighbors, you must learn what each person is doing, what activities he had with the old regime. You must learn about his friends, his relations, his attitudes, his hobbies, his philosophy. Everyone must be watched."

In short, Castro formed a nationwide espionage corps. Today it has mushroomed into 200,000 committees, numbering some 4.5 million people, or more than half the adults in the entire Cuban population.

What is the purpose of so gigantic a spy network? To supervise the surveillance of every Cuban? To see what goes on in each neighborhood? To have neighbor spy upon neighbor?

Its main purpose is to serve as a bulwark against sabotage, but since there is now little sabotage in Cuba, the CDR has developed over the years into an all-purpose citizen action group.

For example, its members, more than half of whom are women, see to it that every Cuban youngster takes a sugar pill which immunizes the child against polio. They also act as truant officers and neighborhood beautification police.

When the government ordered illiteracy stamped out in Cuba, the CDR supplied more than 100,000 volunteer teachers to trek into the most isolated areas of the island to teach the peasantry.

Each "cuadra" or block in Cuba's cities has its CDR president, and these presidents are responsible for mobilizing men to harvest the sugar and women to harvest the coffee and the fruit on weekends.

Members of the CDR are called "ceeristas," and Castro is now using an increasing number of them as construction workers. Two years ago 500,000 ceeristas completely rebuilt the Havana sports stadium.

Ceeristas also teach courses in Marx-Lenin doctrine and see to it that Castro's latest orders are fully obeyed. They constitute his greatest defense against the kind of revolution which 14 years ago brought him to power.